

To : Public Accounts Committee
Student Transport Assistance Policy Framework Inquiry

08/11/2021

In mid to late 2018 I was informed by school bus services that they were making changes to two of our three evergreen contract school runs. The result of these changes was a reduction of over 10k income annually to our contracts and a reduction in the number of eligible students and an increase in the number of complimentary students. We were told that we had no say in this decision and that it was being done solely to stop an overlap where more than 1 bus picked up students for the same school at the same pickup point which currently was the case due to a temporary SBS contract operating in the same area as our evergreen contracts.

The SBS contract in question was a c class 57 seat bus that daily traveled from Bunbury to Yarloop a journey that required it to be running empty for **nearly 200km each day and loaded for less than 50km a day**, this SBS bus was part of a joint tender to be awarded the following year and we were told the changes had to be in place before that issue, interestingly please note that bus never appeared to be at more than 50% capacity.

I suggested at the time that since we ran 2 contracts for a depot less than 20 km away with 1 contract a 57-seat bus C class booked for replacement the following year and the other a 43-seat B class bus that was only 4 years away from a required replacement that it would be in the interest of the taxpayer and the local students to not include the SBS bus run from Bunbury in the upcoming tender and simply upgrade the 43-seat local evergreen contract to a 57-seater either the following year or when it was due in 2023.

This would eliminate a costly unviable 3rd contract in the area and provide a better and far more economical solution.

I was ignored and told that this was not on School bus Services agenda .

A little more than a few months after the new runs and the newly awarded SBS temporary contract had commenced surprise, surprise the SBS contract began to once again overlap my two evergreen contracts making the reason I had been given for the changes very questionable .

It is my perception that this whole exercise was simply to make sure an obviously completely unviable bus run was able to be incorporated in a 2019 SBS batch tender , why I can only guess ?

As my b class evergreen contract now is inside the 12-month time frame for scheduled replacement submission I also wonder if the other motive behind this is to weaken this contract and provide grounds to reduce it from a B class to a C class ? this I will know within 6 months.

In closing I believe the committee should investigate the practices and the justification of school Bus Services in relation to the issue of the batched tenders in question and their policy of putting an unviable short-term bus runs on to weaken existing long term evergreen contracts.

Your Sincerely
Mark Davis
Managing Director
Waroona Harvey Bus Services